



**Susan B. Anthony Project**  
SAFETY • HEALING • GROWTH

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Jeanne S. Fusco

February 16, 2016

Senator Beth Bye, Co-Chair Appropriations

Representative Toni Walker, Co-Chair Appropriations

Senator Kane

Representative Ziobran

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Rep. Ziobran and  
Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jeanne Fusco. I am Executive Director of Susan B. Anthony Project (SBAP), a nonprofit, community services organization serving sexual assault and domestic violence victims in northwest CT.

I am writing to oppose HB 5044 and Governor Malloy's proposal for a 5.75% budget cut. I also oppose consolidation of funds for sexual assault victims into a general fund.

In the aftermath of devastating and life changing experiences of sexual violence, victims often tell me they feel "invisible." The proposed plan to remove a specific line item in the FY17 budget to address the needs of sexual violence survivors sends a strong message that their personal experience is not significant enough to warrant focused response by our State of Connecticut and facilitates the idea that survivors and their needs *will* become invisible.

Susan B. Anthony Project provides sexual assault crisis and response services 24/7, 365 days per year at no cost to victims in twenty towns including Barkhamsted, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington and Winsted. We are the only service provider in our region that specialize in the delivery of counseling and advocacy services for sexual assault victims.

**Any budget cut is devastating to a nonprofit, community based organization such as SBAP. No position is fully funded and there are limits to fundraising from private foundations and individual contributors.** In recent years, we have worked to reduce our reliance on federal and state funds from 65% to 43% by our commitment to fundraising on behalf of the victims in the communities we serve. Funding for rape crisis programs in the Department of Public Health budget is critical to continue to provide these services. **We cannot absorb additional cuts.**

It should be stated that legislative initiatives have resulted in an increased demand for prevention and education programs. For instance, Northwestern CT Community College and UCONN Torrington have extended additional requests for services as they form their Sexual Assault Resource Teams on campus. Local high schools have reached out for assurance that we will be able to respond in the event of a school crisis involving sexual assault.

We ***WANT*** to be available to meet the needs of victims, schools, private businesses, and anyone in our community who requires our expertise. Our connection has proven to be positively life-altering to those who have received these services.

I would like to tell you about a success that illustrates the ways in which maintaining a visible and supported presence will improve the lives of victims, such as Phil. As an 8 year old, Phil was sexually abused. He found comfort in alcohol and drugs as he developed. After several rehab attempts, a program he was a part of included a counselor-advocate from Susan B. Anthony Project. Phil and the advocate met weekly. Phil was able, through this process, to tell the story of his childhood sexual abuse and with continued support from his advocate was able to share it with his program clinicians. He is clear that this has made all of the difference in his ability to be clean and sober—for ten years now. He has offered his support to SBAP and has allowed us to tell his story and use his image because he is grateful for the ways in which this support has brought positive change in his life.

Consider Phil and the thousands of CT residents who seek services for sexual assault each year. The needs of survivors must not be consolidated in ways that compromise service funding.

Oppose Governor Malloy's proposed budget plan and restore the rape crisis line item at full funding.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeanne S. Fusco

Executive Director